

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Uncompahgre Field Office
2465 S. Townsend Ave.
Montrose, CO 81401**

Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2011-0003 EA

Location:

Parcel 5910: T. 12 S., R. 91 W., 6th PM, Sec. 12: NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, Gunnison County, 40.00 acres

Parcel 5911: T. 45 N., R. 15 W., NMPM, Sec. 7: Lots 1-4, E $\frac{1}{2}$, E $\frac{1}{2}$ W $\frac{1}{2}$; Sec. 8: W $\frac{1}{2}$ W $\frac{1}{2}$, Montrose County, 802.6 acres.

Project Name: August 2011 Competitive Oil & Gas Lease Sale, Parcels 5910 & 5911

Applicant: BLM

Background

The BLM Uncompahgre Field Office (UFO) has completed Environment Assessment (EA) # DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2011-0003 which documents the review of two parcels that were nominated for oil and gas leasing. The parcels were nominated by expression of interest by external entities which were filed with the BLM Colorado State Office. The parcels that are recommended to be offered in the August 2011 Competitive Oil and Gas Lease Sale are under the administration of the UFO.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based upon a review of the analysis of potential environmental impacts contained in the EA, I have determined that the Proposed Action to lease the parcels for oil and gas will not have a significant effect on the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area.

Rationale

This FONSI is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), with regard to the context and the intensity of impacts described in the EA.

Context

Parcel 5910 is 40 acres, all of which is split estate; it has private surface with BLM mineral estate. The parcel is located in Gunnison County.

Parcel 5911 is 802.6 acres, all of which is BLM surface and federal mineral estate. The parcel is located in Montrose County.

The EA analyzes the oil and gas leasing action; it does not analyze potential surface disturbing development actions that may or may not be proposed in the future.

Intensity

1) Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.

Benefits of the proposed action include offering federal land mineral estate parcels for competitive oil and gas leasing to allow private individuals or companies to explore for and potentially develop oil and gas resources for sale on public markets. Production of oil and gas resources on public lands contributes to decreasing the dependence of the United States on foreign energy sources. It is the policy of the BLM as derived from various laws, including the Mineral Leasing Act of 1920 and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, to make mineral resources available for leasing to meet national, regional, and local needs. The EA indicated no significant impacts on society as a whole, the affected region, the affected interests, or the locality, from the leasing decision. Any future development of the lease would be analyzed at the time of the site-specific Application for Permit to Drill (APD) stage. Authorization of future development projects would require full compliance with BLM directives and stipulations.

2) The degree to which the proposed action affects public health and safety.

The decision to lease oil and gas does not in itself affect public health and safety. If oil and gas development activities are proposed in the future, it will be subject to site-specific environmental analysis.

3) Unique Characteristics of the geographic area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.

Twenty elements of the human environment were analyzed in the EA. The proposed action would not impact historic or cultural resources, wetlands, or ecologically critical areas. Both parcels would be subject to Exhibit CO-39 to protect cultural resources. The proposed lease areas do not have wilderness, wilderness study areas, lands with wilderness characteristics, wild and scenic rivers, park lands, or prime farmlands.

4) The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.

The decision to lease oil and gas does not affect the quality of the human environment, and does not have highly controversial impacts. Oil and gas leasing decisions are not unique and have

been made in this area for many years. If development of the leases is proposed in the future, it is at that stage that the site specific effects to the human environment will be analyzed.

5) The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

There are no effects that are considered to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risk as a result of the leasing decision. These decisions are not unique or unusual.

6) The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.

This decision is not precedent setting. Future oil and gas development actions will be analyzed for their site specific impacts when an APD is submitted. The Proposed Action is not unusual and significant cumulative effects are not predicted. The decision does not represent a decision in principle about a future consideration.

7) Consideration of the action in relation to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.

The decision to lease does not establish an assurance for future surface disturbing activities from which a cumulative impact analysis can be adequately addressed. The Proposed Action was considered in the context of past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions. No significant cumulative effects are predicted.

8) The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.

Record searches indicate that parcel 5910 has no recorded cultural properties and is in a locality in which few or no sites may be predicted. Parcel 5911 is known to contain six recorded cultural properties, two of which are eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Future inventory is expected to locate and record more historic properties within this parcel. Leasing of oil and gas parcels has no direct potential for surface disturbance, and no effect to the known properties is anticipated from this action. Inventory and site avoidance or mitigation will be required prior to any surface disturbing activities proposed at the APD stage. Both parcels would be subject to Exhibit CO-39 to protect cultural resources.

9) The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat.

The UFO staff have reviewed the parcels; no adverse impacts to any threatened or endangered species or their habitat under the Endangered Species Act were identified. If, at a future time,

development is proposed, it would be subject to site specific environmental analysis and projects could be modified or mitigated so as to not have an adverse effect. Both parcels would be subject to Exhibit CO-34 to alert lessee of potential habitat for a threatened, endangered, candidate, or other special status plant or animal.

10) Whether the action threatens a violation of federal, state, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.

To the best of my knowledge the Proposed Action does not violate or threaten violation of any federal, state, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

Determination

This Finding of No Significant Impact is based on the information contained in the EA and my consideration of criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27). It is my determination that: 1) the implementation of the proposed action will not have significant environmental impacts; 2) the Proposed Action is in conformance with the Uncompahgre Basin and San Juan/San Miguel Resource Management Plans; and 3) the Proposed Action does not constitute a major federal action having significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not necessary.

Approved:

*This is an unsigned FONSI, released with the
Draft EA for Public review and comment.*

Barbara Sharrow
Field Manager
Uncompahgre Field Office

Date